

The Messenger

Holston Baptist Association

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NO. 7

FROM THE DESK OF THE AMS

The Growing Season

by Dr. Troy Rust

The following article comes from the Desk of the AMS, in anticipation of the Church Planting Cohort that the association will be hosting in the Spring of 2026.

The Growing Season

Now that the weather has finally warmed up, you may have noticed how certain things have really started growing. Whether it's your yard, your garden, or your potted plants, all of them benefit from a higher average temperature. Warmer nights now ensure that the things you're trying to grow don't suffer from extreme temperature fluctuations.

I would love to see the warm night effect take off in our churches! If you look at any church without a history of long-tenured pastors, you will notice a repeated trend of ups and downs that, when charted on paper, look like an EKG! Like the spring growing season, the days of spiritual warmth frequently have been undercut by the cold nights of division and disobedience. When a new pastor arrives things warm up, but within a year or two (sometimes less) things cool down quickly. After the "honeymoon" period, the members of this kind church

typically discover that they didn't really want a leader, because leaders bring change. They wanted a manager to help them get better results from the same wrong decisions. At this point, it's usually only a matter of time until decline sets in (sometimes intentionally) and the pastor's exit is planned and executed. Like Elizabeth Taylor, this church will fall in love with someone else (the next pastor) soon only to see another relationship end in divorce.

Why does this vicious cycle exist in churches? It usually goes something like this. A group of people who desire to win souls and disciple believers help plant and strengthen a new church. Within as little as two or three years, the visionaries who launched the church busy themselves with maintaining the new institution. The church that once looked prayerfully at spiritual fields that were white unto harvest, now occupies its time with material concerns and the demands of the members. The same people who were once too focused on the lost to worry about temporal things are now so focused on temporal things that they no longer worry about the lost. The church plant is now a country club that exists to

please its members and keep out the misfits. If the church began as the result of a church split, this outcome is even more likely.

Not only will this church fall into dysfunction, it will suffer a spiritual amnesia that causes it to forget that it would not exist had there not been people with a passion to reach the lost. It will not see the urgency to do the same for other lost people. The cycle of cultural blindness and selfish

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The Growing Season (Cont.)

presumption will keep this church from ever thinking about starting another church. It's like the average owner of a female Persian cat. Although she was designed to reproduce, you invested way too much money for her not to be a good pet! You want her to be beautiful, easy to control, and live a risk-free life, so you get her fixed. She will never reproduce. She's the prettiest cat in town. She'll never get out of control and saddle you with a

bunch of offspring. She can now live a predictable life of ease... and then get old and die. Going from fit to fat brought on her death even sooner than expected.

The local church is not our pet to manipulate for our selfish desires. It's the Body of Christ, and healthy bodies grow and reproduce. **In the spring of 2026, HBA will sponsor a church planting cohort to help train men to plant churches.**

Who do you know that needs to participate? Please tell us about them! Remember, church plants will need sponsors and sending churches. How will your church be a part of the next generation of church plants?

With hands to the plow,

Dr. Troy Rust

Associational Mission

Strategist

Holston Baptist Assoc.

ANNOUNCEMENT & GUEST FEATURE

Christ, Marriage's Cornerstone

by Paul Farrior

As many of you know, Matthew Powell, our Ministry Assistant, was married to Joanna Hester (Powell) in May of this year (See photo on page 3)! This exciting occasion took place at Matthew and Joanna's church, Central Baptist in Johnson City. The pastor that married them was Paul Farrior, CBC's Congregational Care, Education, and Outreach Pastor. After his fair treatment of Ephesians 5, we believed it fitting to feature his homily with the announcement of Mr. and Mrs. Powell's wedding. The manuscript follows:

Let us turn now to the Word of God. I will be reading from Ephesians 5:21-33, where the apostle Paul gives us a vision of marriage that flows from the gospel itself.

[The text reads]

"submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he may sanctify her,

having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

- Ephesians 5:21-33

The Apostle Paul begins this passage not with commands to husbands or wives, but with a general call to all believers:

"Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." (v. 21)

This is the air a Christian marriage breathes: a mutual humility flowing from a shared reverence for Jesus Christ. This verse isn't erased by the roles that follow—it sets the tone for

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Christ, Marriage's Cornerstone (Cont.)

them. Biblical marriage isn't a power struggle, and it's also not a 50/50 contract. It is a covenant of two servants, each submitting to Christ and living out their God-given roles for the good of the other and the glory of the Lord.

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord."
(v. 22)

Joanna this verse is not to be understood as a license for control—far from it. Biblical submission is a gift of strength, not weakness. It's the willing choice to honor your husband's leadership as an act of worship to the Lord. You are not called to submit because your husband will always get it right — he certainly won't — but because you trust in the One who established marriage and walks with you in it.

This kind of submission does not silence your voice or diminish your value. You are an image-bearer of God, equal in worth, dignity, and importance. And just as Christ is not threatened by His Church's devotion, your husband will be honored and encouraged by your godly respect.

You are called to be his strongest earthly ally, his companion in the gospel, and the joyful echo of Christ's Bride.

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." (v. 25)



Pictured: Matthew and Joanna Powell at their wedding on Saturday, May 24th, 2025

Matthew you are called to love, not with sentiment, but with sacrifice. Christ gave Himself up for His bride—not when she was spotless, but in order to make her so. Your leadership must never be selfish. If your headship looks like pride, control, or silence, it is not Christlike. Christ leads by laying his own life down.

To love your wife as Christ loved the Church means you will lead in prayer, in purity in humility, and in sacrificial decision-making. You are to nourish and cherish her, not just emotionally or physically, but spiritually—washing her with the Word and reminding her of the gospel.

Paul continues:

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church." (v. 31-32)

That's the heart of it. Your marriage isn't just a private relationship — it is a public proclamation of the gospel.

The husband's love is to reflect the initiative, faithfulness, and sacrifice of Jesus.

The wife's response is to reflect the devotion, trust, and honor

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Christ, Marriage's Cornerstone (Cont.)

of the redeemed Church.

Your marriage is meant to be a living sermon: a visual aid to a watching world of how Christ loves sinners and how sinners, redeemed, joyfully submit to Him.

And this is no small thing. When you forgive one another, you're showing the grace of Christ. When you remain faithful in trial, you're declaring the endurance of God's covenant.

When you rejoice together in the Lord, you are putting the beauty of holiness on display.

Today, Joanna and Matthew, you begin not just a new season, but a new ministry. Your home is now a small outpost of God's kingdom.

In your marriage, let the Word of God dwell richly, let repentance come quickly, let prayer be your daily breath, let worship be your rhythm.

And, above all, let Christ be your cornerstone. He is the only One who can sustain your love, sanctify your hearts, and make your home holy.

Paul Farrior

*Congregational Care, Outreach,
and Education Pastor*

Central Baptist Church,
Johnson City

GUEST FEATURE

Serving at the JC Baptist Center *by Taylor Pruett*

The year is 2018 and our church signed up to serve at Backyard Bible Club held at the Johnson City Baptist Center. Unbeknownst to us, this week would forever change our hearts as a church. We fell in love with this community as well as the Johnson City Baptist Center. In 2018 we were able to meet a middle school student who was just looking to play some kickball and eat dinner. Little did he know that he would soon be hearing about a man that would forever change his life. In the years to come, Jesus became the sole focus of this student's life.

Fast forward to 2025. The middle school student who was only coming to Backyard Bible club for food and games is now showing up to help us lead. He, being known in his community, started telling others about Jesus. The God who changed his life. As we were finishing up

with snack, this student brings me one of his friends and says, "He wants to know more about Jesus... Can we talk with you?" While Jesus was shared, and the Gospel was heard we got to see firsthand the fruits of our labor. Only 7 years prior did we show up to tell him about Jesus. Now he is bringing us students to talk about Jesus. The same student that just a few years ago was being ministered to was now doing the ministering. Often in ministry we do not get to see the fruit of our faithfulness but this year at Backyard Bible Club we did! The churches in the Holston Baptist Association

have been pivotal to support, pray, and fund the Johnson City Baptist Center. I pray that you and your church would support, pray, and volunteer to help those in our community to learn and live to be more like Jesus. We are truly thankful to Anna as she pours out her heart

weekly to these families and students.

I do not give this account to boast about what our church has done but to boast at what our God has done! We have been blessed to see the fruitfulness that has been produced at the Johnson City Baptist Center. I pray that as you read this short account you find assurance that God will produce fruit for you and your ministry. I also encourage you to share faithfully with your community because who knows? Maybe 7 years will pass, and discipleship will be on full display for you!

Signed,
His Servant,

Taylor Pruett

Student Pastor

Mountain View
Baptist Church

ANNOUNCEMENT

A Call to Prayer

by Matthew Powell

The State of Tennessee House of Representatives has recently passed House Joint Resolution No. 51, "A Resolution to seek Almighty God's hand of ever-present mercy and healing on Tennessee".

The passing of this resolution gives us, as the Holston Baptist Association, and all believers alike, an incredible opportunity to gather and pray diligently for our state.

The final statement of the resolution reads, "Be it further resolved that [the TN House of Representatives] call upon those who are physically able and spiritually inclined to join with us annually during the month of July in a season of prayer and fasting, depriving ourselves in order to awaken our hunger for and need of God, humbling ourselves before Him, asking His forgiveness, and seeking His blessings, grace, and mercy so that we, our communities, our state, and our nation will be transformed."

The passing of this sort of resolution must be celebrated greatly by believers, as this opens the door for us to push further. But, that is an important reminder: we should be pushing further.

We must be reminded that the work is far from complete! Even within this bill, though it

is a step in the right direction, there is a lack of firmness, a lack of exclusivity, and a lack of Christ. This resolution can be found at www.pray4tn.us and, if you are to look at it, you will notice that the Name of Christ is not mentioned. In addition, you may notice that the final statement, already mentioned in this announcement, invites the "spiritually inclined" to join. This is what our culture has produced - one in which vague and watered down language seeps through every crack, even in a resolution like this, prompting us to look to the wrong things, asking Him for things that do not matter, such as worldly prosperity and earthly blessing.

So, let us celebrate this win, and let us pray with the many that will gather this month. But, let us also push even harder, so that the next resolution will be full of rich language of the glories of Christ, asking not for trivial blessing, but for the gospel of Christ to go out powerfully across our state, to see His Name magnified through the testimony of Tennesseans from Memphis to our own back door.

Praying for grace, peace, and fruitful work always,
In love and in Christ,



HBA Ministry Assistant



Meeting Times/Locations

Prayer meetings for July 2025 will take place at the following locations in our region:

Carter County Court House --
July 1st, 11:00am

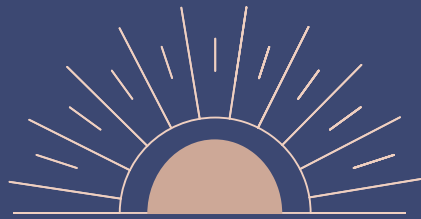
Sullivan County Court House -
- July 1st, 2:00pm

Greene County Court House --
July 3rd, 4:30am

Washington County Old
Historic Court House -- July
7th, 8:00am

Unicoi County Court House --
July 7th, 10:00am

Final Statewide Gathering will take place on Saturday, August 2nd, in Nashville, TN. This will take place from 12:00pm to 2:00pm. (Location TBA)



Monday
MANNA

AUGUST 25TH
10:30 - 12:30

Monday Manna is postponed for the summer. We will resume meeting on Monday, August 25, 2025.



Southwestern Baptist Church

1112 Cherokee Rd.
Johnson City, TN 37604

September 6th, 2025
8:00am - 12:00pm

Southwestern Baptist Church in Johnson City, Tennessee will be hosting a 4-hour **Tactics & Firearms Handling class for Armed Protectors on Saturday, September 6th, 2025, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** This dry practice (non-live fire) course is designed for anyone currently carrying a firearm or interested in learning how to handle one safely in a crowded environment. The class takes place indoors at the church and is suitable for all skill levels, including (but not limited to) church security team members, law enforcement, beginners, or interested congregation members.

Participants will explore realistic response strategies tailored to church environments and learn how to reduce risk through proper training. No handgun license is required, and you do not need to be on a security team to attend. Training guns and holsters will be provided, and class size is limited to 35 participants. If the morning class fills up, we will run an additional class at 1pm.

A graphic with the text "July Birthdays" in a stylized, overlapping font on a blue background. To the right is a yellow party hat with white polka dots and a blue starburst on top.

July 9th -- Scott Johnston
July 19th -- Stan Anderson
July 23rd -- Tanner Mundy

HBA Job Board

Piney Flats First Baptist Church

Senior Pastor

Piney Flats, TN | Full Time

For job description(s) and more information, please visit holstonba.org/jobs or contact the church. Please send information to apply to Piney Flats First Baptist Church, 100 Cherry Rd, Piney Flats, Tn 37686. ATTN: Kathy Smith. or via email to mkbarnes357@gmail.com.

First Baptist Church, Fall Branch

Minister of Music

Fall Branch, TN | Part-Time

First Baptist Church of Fall Branch seeks a part-time Minister of Music to lead Christ-centered worship, blending traditional hymns and contemporary praise. Responsibilities include directing the choir, overseeing musicians, recruiting volunteers, and planning worship services in collaboration with the Pastor. Candidates should have a strong faith, a clear calling to music ministry, and leadership experience in worship and choir direction. To apply, submit a resume and cover letter to FBFBMusicCommittee@gmail.com or mail to First Baptist Church of Fall Branch, 1525 TN-93, Fall Branch, TN 37656.

Cherokee Baptist Church

Senior Pastor

Jonesborough, TN | Bi-Vocational

Please send resume, references and cover letter (experience and vision) to Cherokee Baptist Church, 143 Mayberry Rd. Jonesborough, TN 37659. ATTN: Pastor Search Committee or via email: cherokeepastorsearch@gmail.com.

Pinecrest Baptist Church

Worship Leader

Johnson City, TN | Part-Time

Pinecrest Baptist Church (2129 Old Lewis Road, Johnson City, TN) is seeking a part-time Worship Leader. Interested applicants may contact Pastor Garry Edwards (423-543-5662) or the church office (423-926-9394) for more information.

Central Baptist Church, Johnson City **Custodian & Maintenance Associate**

Johnson City, TN | Full-Time

Central Baptist Church in Johnson City is seeking to hire a full time Custodian & Maintenance Associate, starting at \$15.00. This position plays an essential role in maintaining the church building and ensuring that church activities & facilities are able to run smoothly. To apply, or for more information, visit cbcjc.org/careers

Visit holstonba.org/jobs to view more information or apply for the listed openings.

Pray for Churches Without Pastors

- Cherokee, Jonesborough
- Friendship Chapel
- Muddy Creek
- Piney Flats First Baptist
- Southwestern Baptist
- Tennessee Avenue

